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THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE.

BY ROLAND P. FALKNER.

The International Statistical Institute held its fifth session at Berne, August 26 to 31, 1895. The local committee had arranged the details of the session quite skillfully, showing a generous hospitality which was thoroughly appreciated by the guests. The members of the Institute attended the session to the number of about sixty, and the invited guests, professors, and officials of Switzerland were equally numerous.

The labors of the session were divided into meetings of the general assembly, and of four sections, devoted respectively to population, commercial, agricultural, and social statistics. The programme of the general assembly follows : —

MONDAY, AUGUST 26.

Opening Address of the President, Sir Rawson W. Rawson.
Cheyson (Paris). Survey of the Losses Inflicted on the Middle Classes
by the Fall of Interest on Bonds, etc.
Schmoller (Berlin). Incomes in the Past and in the Present.
* Kleczniski (Cracow). Statistics of Poland in Former Days.
† Crupenski (Bucharest). Demography of Roumania.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27.—Morning Session.

Bodio (Rome). International Mortality Statistics.
Vacher (Paris). The Longevity of Families.
Lexis (Göttingen). Causes of Statistical Regularities.
Troinitsky (St. Petersburg). The Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Afternoon Session.

Rauchberg (Vienna). The Electrical Machine Applied to the Census
Analysis.
Bateman (London). The Labor Office.
Moron (Paris). Irregularity of Employment.
* Gruner (Paris). Labor Accidents.
Rasp (Munich). International Savings Banks Statistics Grouped by
Occupations.

Evening Session.

Public Lecture on Statistical Laws, by v. Mayr (Strassburg).

* Absent. † Read by title.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28.—Morning Session.

De Foville (Paris). Statistics of the Precious Metals.

Juglar (Paris). Commercial Crises.

Denis (Brussels). International Organization of Labor Statistics.

* Billings (Washington). International Military Medical Statistics.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29.—Morning Session.

Troinitsky (St. Petersburg). The Utilization of the Means of Communication in Russia.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30.—Morning Session.

Craigie (London). International Statistics of Agricultural Products.

Inama-Sternegg (Vienna). Morphology of Agricultural Labor.

‡ Körösi (Budapest). A Method of Determining the Influence of Climatological Elements in the Appearance of Disease.

‡ Körösi (Budapest). The Measure of the Density of Dwellings.

Levasseur (Paris). Statistics of Forests.

Afternoon Session.

* Engel (Berlin). Comparative Statement of Workingmen's Budgets in Belgium.

Klaer (Christiania). On the Method of Representative Enumerations, Serving as a Type of the Entire Population of a State.

† Raseri (Rome). Comparative Statistics of Abandoned Children.

‡ Olanesco (Bucharest). The Anthropometrical Department.

Evening Session.

Public Lecture on the History of Demography, by Levasseur (Paris).

The programme of the general sessions fails to give a complete idea of the labors of the Institute, as considerable time was devoted to the reports of committees and sections. The result was to further crowd a programme which was already too full.

Before taking up the work of committees and sections, we may turn our attention to the papers presented. The crowded programme was very dispiriting to the assembly. Discussion was choked off entirely or greeted with a suppressed impatience which, if it did not chill the orators, gave the assembly the listless appearance of a legislative body during the transaction of routine business. This effect was, perhaps, heightened by the place of meeting, the hall of the national assembly, where the writing materials provided by the local committee tempted the assembled statisticians to epistolary efforts.

* Absent; read in abstract. † Read by title. ‡ Absent.

The Babel of tongues incident to international gatherings was also responsible in part for the slight attention paid to the speakers.

If the first defect of the programme was its quantity, a second was to be found in its quality. The papers presented were of the most diverse order, and at times seemed destined to exhibit the personality of the writer quite as much as to promote the purposes for which the session was held. The papers could be grouped as follows: —

1. Demands for international statistics in various fields.
2. Interpretation of statistical results.
3. Accounts of statistical work in various countries.
4. Discussions of statistical methods.

The papers belonging to the first group were apparently especially appropriate to the discussions of the Institute. This would have been the case had they contained plans and projects for the execution of the statistical researches demanded. But they were in several cases limited to demonstrating that such researches would be valuable. In an ordinary assembly they might have been in place, but in an assembly of specialists it was disappointing to listen for half an hour to the elucidation of some perfectly well-known phenomenon, which reached the weighty conclusion that a committee should be appointed to investigate it.

In an assembly devoted to the promotion of statistical methods the papers of the second class had no place. However interesting and important they might have been elsewhere, the assembly was not concerned with them. Had they applied new methods of analysis or novel groupings of phenomena already known, there might have been some excuse for them. As it was, they did not present any of these characteristics.

Papers of the third class had the merit of brevity. They were confined to an account of the scope of statistical research, and recorded the progress made in this direction.

The fourth category of papers, in which special attention was paid to statistical methods, was not so well filled as it should have been. Accounts of the perfection of statistical method belong preëminently to the scope of the Institute. In every country actively pushing its statistical researches there is a constant advance in method. This is notably the case in our own country, and some of our recent work might properly have engaged the attention of the session.

Considering the papers alone, it is the firm conviction of the present writer that at least one-half of them were inappropriate and should have been omitted. The incoherence of the Budapest Congress of Hygiene and Demography, which was pardonable in an organization having a more popular mission, and practically without restrictions as to membership, was surely out of place in a body like the Institute, supposed, as it is, to represent the small number of the elect of the statisticians of the whole earth. In such a body one looks for clear, systematic thinking, in conformity with the fixed purpose of the gathering. One is disappointed not to find it, though he may be loath to believe that in the multiplicity of congresses the general level of thought must needs be depressed.

If the Institute is to maintain a higher level than more democratic bodies, it is evident to the writer that it needs more direction. He believes that the papers to be presented should first receive the approval of the Bureau. He is sure that the keen sense of the General Secretary, Professor Bodio, would clearly separate the wheat from the chaff. The writer does not presume to maintain that his eminent associates really produce chaff, but that what may be wheat in other quarters may be chaff for the purposes of the Institute. If such a method were pursued a number of papers would be discarded, as they are simply arguments in favor of proposed motions, while others containing information suitable for the Institute would be read by title only.

But if the Bureau cannot undertake the supervision of all papers, let it adopt the procedure which operates so successfully in the *Verein für Social Politik*, and which consists in the selection of one or two topics, and a thorough discussion of them by speakers selected in advance.

In the sections constituted for the study of motions presented, the real work of the Institute was accomplished. Here questions of method were discussed freely and fully, the result of the deliberations being reported to the general assembly. The relative competence of these sections created for the session of Berne, and of permanent committees instituted at previous sessions, was by no means clear. Yet as all committee reports passed through the sections, we may confine our attention to the latter. We may consider briefly the conclusions of the sections which, unless the contrary is stated, were adopted by the general assembly.

At Vienna, in 1891, the Institute had approved the principle, which the Austrian census carried into practice, of exchanging individual census returns of citizens of other nations enumerated in any nation with the census bureaus of the nations to which they respectively belong. While the results in Austria had not proved altogether satisfactory, the Austrian statisticians asked the Institute to confirm the principle, and extend it also to all persons born in any country who might be domiciled elsewhere, irrespective of whether they are or had become citizens in their country of residence. Such a resolution was accepted by the Institute.

The proposition to adopt a standard population with uniform age classes, for promoting comparability in international calculations of mortality, was favorably presented by M. Guillaume. It is proposed that a calculation based on the standard population be added to all reports on mortality. The standard approved by the Institute is based on the population of Sweden, divided into five age classes, as follows: 0-1 year, 2-19, 20-39, 40-59, 60 and over.

M. Nicolai, of Belgium, pleaded in favor of registers of the population to be established after census operations had taken place, which could be so kept as to record the movement and migration of population. The first section recommended that the subject be studied; and after a debate in the general assembly, which revealed great scepticism as to the practicability of such registers, a committee was appointed to investigate the subject.

Dr. Guillaume, of the Swiss Statistical Bureau, made a strong report in favor of a general census of population in 1900. He demonstrated that, should the date of December 1, 1900, be adopted, the changes to be made by each State would be insignificant. While they might lengthen or abbreviate the customary interval between enumerations, he believed that the confusion thus arising would be fully compensated by the increased comparability of statistics the world over. Whether a date in December would suit the conditions of the United States does not seem to have been discussed, though for us it is by no means a minor matter. Greater difficulty would arise in preparing a uniform schedule and adopting a uniform definition of the words employed. Yet these difficulties will, perhaps, not prove insuperable on closer examination. With unanimity the assembly referred the matter to a committee composed of the statistical officials in each country in charge of the census enumerations.

Dr. von Mayr presented a motion for the publication of an international annual of the movement of population. After a long discussion in the section the contents of six proposed tables were agreed upon. It is supposed that in the first instance such a publication be made by the Institute, but that in the course of time it be given a more enduring basis by the establishment of a special bureau based on an international convention.

In pursuance of instructions given at a previous meeting, the Committee on Infirmities presented, through Dr. Bertillon, a valuable report on the nomenclature of the same. After describing those now in use it proposed three schedules containing, respectively, 29, 56 and 99 classes. By the adoption of any of them, comparison would be possible, though the preference is naturally for the most detailed. Further distinctions should be those of sex and of ages, at least in periods of twenty years. It is proposed that in the case of the existence of two or more infirmities in one person, he should be counted once only, according to the most apparent or most serious infirmity.

Dr. Bertillon also proposed a nomenclature of accidents which had been adopted in Germany, and was already in use in Austria and France.

The statistics of occupations have long engaged the attention of the Institute. In previous sessions a general schedule was recommended. It was felt that its value might be enhanced by the recommendation of a small number (100) of special designations, which might figure in every census, whatever groupings might be adopted. Such a list was prepared and reported to the assembly by Dr. Bertillon.

M. Yvernès, of Paris, called attention to the importance of the subject of divorce, and, after giving an outline of the facts to be specially enumerated, proposed the appointment of a committee to be charged with the preparation of an international report on the statistics of divorce.

If the labors of the first section thus far considered were more fruitful than those of the other sections, it was, perhaps, because population statistics constitute a field where international comparability is most easily attainable. The second section took important action in approving a plan for international statistics of the production, commerce, and consumption of the precious metals. This action was in so far practical that they recognized the necessity of the work

being centralized, and proposed that it should be confided to the government of France. M. de Foville accepted the proposal, which he did not doubt the government of his country would approve.

M. Alfred Neymarck, of Paris, called attention to the losses to individuals incurred by the depreciation of values of personal property and the decline in rates of interest. A committee was appointed to examine the matter, but the vague and indefinite manner in which it was formulated gives little hope that anything will be accomplished.

It was further proposed that agricultural statistics include those of forests, and that particular attention be given to the surface cultivated with the different crops.

The section on social statistics engaged at length in the discussion of three questions,—savings banks, wages, and alcoholism. In regard to the former, Dr. Rasp, of Bavaria, presented an elaborate scheme for a classification of occupations of depositors. As no accord was reached, the matter was passed over to the next session. Concerning wages, the Austrian statisticians, Drs. Inama-Sternegg and Rauchberg, proposed an enlargement of the previous recommendations by demanding exhaustive figures for *all* the wage earners of a given industry or a given district. Many deemed this an impossibility, though the Austrian statisticians announced their intention to undertake such statistics. As it was held that a resolution of the Institute in favor of such statistics might be held as to condemn all previous wage statistics, which are based on partial inquiries, as wholly valueless, modifying clauses were introduced which called for such exhaustive researches, if possible.

Not less important was the action taken in regard to the statistics of alcohol. Director Milliet, of the Swiss Alcohol Bureau, proposed an investigation into the actual state of such statistics in the various countries, and prepared a careful schedule of questions covering the essential points of such statistics. This procedure seems thoroughly practical, and a suitable means of obtaining a notion of the comparability of statistics in this field.

In the course of the proceedings a number of briefer communications were made to the assembly, which found no place on the programme. Among these we can only pause to notice the remarks of Dr. Bertillon on a practical adding machine which Mr. Hollerith had invented, and which he hopes to put on the market at an early date.

With respect to the electrical tabulating machine Mr. Hollerith made the following remarks, which will be of general interest to statisticians : —

“ In connection with the interesting report of Dr. Rauchberg on the electric tabulating machine, it may be proper to point out in what direction the mechanical and electrical side of this question will be developed.

“ This will be, first, in substituting for the present counters arranged with dials counters arranged with wheels provided with type, so that, after a machine has given a correct result, this result will be printed direct from the counters, thus avoiding the possibility of error in transcribing the result. Besides, it can be done by simply depressing a lever, thus saving considerable time.

“ To anyone familiar with mechanical devices, the placing of a card in the electrical machine by hand, then depressing the lever and again removing the card by hand and placing it in the sorting box, must appear exceedingly clumsy. This will be replaced by an automatic feed, which will automatically feed the cards and place them in the proper compartment of what is now the sorting box.

“ The machine for punching cards, as now used, is simple but slow. It will be replaced by a machine provided with a key-board. Each key is practically a valve, controlling communication from a supply of compressed air to a given cylinder connected with and operating a punch. With such a machine, as many holes can be punched in one operation as can be controlled through the respective keys, no work other than touching the corresponding keys being required.

“ The integrating attachment I have demonstrated with a considerable experiment, embracing, as it did, 5,000,000 cards. The use of this device enables agricultural and similar statistics to be compiled by this method. It makes the machine possible for railroad accounting and similar work.

“ These are the lines in which, I believe, the electric tabulating machine will be developed.”

It will, I think, be clearly evident that, for the progress of statistics, the labors of the sections were vastly more important than those of the general assembly. The latter simply approved the work of the former, with little or no debate. An immense amount of business was accomplished in the general assembly at the cost of long and fatiguing sessions, and only by omitting discussion as much as possible.

At the close of the session the officers of the preceding year were re-elected. An amendment to the constitution had been adopted during the session, providing for a Third Vice-President. This office was filled by the election of General Francis A. Walker.